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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION
OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN
Thirteenth session
New York, 17 January-4 February 1994
Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 21 OF THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Reports provided by specialized agencies of the United Nations on the implementation of the Convention in areas falling within the scope of their activities

Note by the Secretary-General

Addendum

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Introductory note

On behalf of the Committee, the Secretariat invited the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), on 22 June 1993, to submit to the Committee by 1 September 1993, a report on information provided by States to FAO on the implementation of article 14 and related articles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which would supplement the information contained in the reports of those States parties to the Convention which will be considered at the thirteenth session. These are the latest reports of Barbados, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Guyana, Japan, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Senegal and Zambia.

Other information sought by the Committee refers to the activities, programmes and policy decisions undertaken by FAO to promote the implementation

* CEDAW/C/1994/1.

of article 14 and related articles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The report annexed hereto has been submitted in compliance with the Committee's request.

Annex

REPORT SUBMITTED BY THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS TO THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN AT ITS THIRTEENTH SESSION*

[Original: English]

Within the framework of the implementation of its Plan of Action for the Integration of Women in Development, FAO has reviewed substantive programme actions recommended by previous Conferences. The following are some examples of the findings:

- The increasing recognition world wide of the critical role of rural women in food production and food security, in natural resources and environmental management and in household management and family welfare;

- The persistent discrimination against rural women as regards access to productive resources, social services and their limited political and legal power;

- The current lack of effort and resources to redress the inequalities.

Considering the above on one side, and the weak policy initiatives on the other, FAO has adopted a two-track approach. First by recognizing and documenting women's roles and giving women means and opportunities to have greater access to resources. Second, over the long term, to promote a greater access to political power and encourage legislative process in order to permanently improve women's access to and control over productive resources. FAO is providing this assistance through training efforts at various levels and through policy advice directed to Member Governments, which focus on achieving changes in the attitude of development specialists and policy makers, enhancing their abilities to deal with the issues and concerns of rural women, and equipping them to develop gender-responsive policies and legislation.

As regards the close relationship between women, population factors and environment, FAO has carried out a series of activities ranging from research on environmental problems in agriculture and livestock production to technical assistance in strengthening human resources and institutional development for socially sensitive and responsive policy and strategy-making, planning and legislation.

Innovative efforts were developed in programmes to enhance women's roles and resources. They concern in particular four critical areas: (1) financial resources, (2) technical training and extension services, (3) environment, natural resources management and sustainable development and (4) nutrition and food security. Regarding area no. 1, actions include the systematization of

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loan procedures, the establishing of revolving funds, the means to reduce transaction costs, in-kind revolving funds and group savings and increasing incomes and savings through grain savings. As regards area no. 2, efforts are directed towards better targeting of women professionals and women farmers, reorientation of agricultural curricula and extension, the publishing of studies on agriculture extension and farm women in the 1980s, reorientation of home economics for rural development in developing countries, to cite a few. Activities concerning women, sustainable development, natural resources management and environment are coordinated by the Office of the Special Advisor to the Director General for Environment and Sustainable Development. While a large number of FAO activities are oriented towards enhancing the role of women in sustainable development, specific efforts are focused on researching and raising awareness of the links between rural women, poverty, population and the environment. For the last item, nutrition and food security, FAO continues to strive to enhance women's roles as primary nutrition managers at the household level, as income providers and as food producers and to increase their access to all necessary resources. The World Declaration and Plan of Action for Nutrition was adopted by the International Conference on Nutrition in December 1992. It places particular emphasis on eliminating all forms of discrimination and on promoting gender equality. To that end, several mechanisms have been set up such as: understanding women's roles in the community; affording women and girls equitable access to economic opportunities, education and training; and adopting legal measures and social practices that guarantee women's equal participation in the development process by ensuring their access and rights to utilize productive resources, markets, credits, property and other family resources.

FAO's Plan of Action on People's Participation in Rural Development recognizes the vital role which can be played by women's organizations including grassroots groups, professional associations, non-governmental organizations and networks by forming the core for political advocacy. FAO's work centres on strengthening these groups through various means including training.

In conclusion, FAO continues to make significant progress in the implementation of the Plan of Action for the Integration of Women in Development. It has developed innovative and successful interventions oriented towards increasing rural women's access to resources, especially to financial resources, extension and training. The World Conference on Nutrition provided a forum and a plan of action to further diffuse the positive experience and lessons learned regarding women, nutrition and food security.